

ROAD
track & traffic
TEST

Photos by John Plow

PONTIAC GTO

Third in our series of 1970 domestic cars, the Pontiac GTO as delivered from our friends at Oshawa, Ontario, was equipped with a modest amount of optional goodies. We didn't have the pleasure of a manual four-speed gearbox or even a console-mounted automatic shifter, but after putting in a heavy weekend of well over 600 miles came to a few conclusions. With the aforementioned items, we're tempted to call this variant on the GTO theme the middle aged man's muscle car. As equipped, our test car fits a sector of the performance area that we thought didn't exist. With GM's new 455 CID V8, and the simple column mounted transmission control, plus electric rear window defroster and a power seat control on the driver's side, it really fits the above description.

Our test car did have heavy duty suspension, wide, wide oval tires and disc brakes (now standard on the GTO

line) and with this combination, made the car a easy task to drive at high speeds all day long. In addition, the car was equipped with Pontiac's Ram Air option. (This is a clever little device under the dash that connects to two doors on the hood scoops. To force a little extra air into the four barrel carburetor, you merely yank out the knob and step on the gas. This gives you a slight semi supercharged effect). It being the dead of winter, we had few opportunities to really get a chance to wind the car out (it's been our fate in recent years to be offered the biggest, fastest machinery while snow and ice cover the landscape. Wide ovals and snow/ice are not the most compatible combinations).

Now to some basics. Our GTO was equipped with GM's newest big incher, the 455 CID 4-barrel aspirated V8. It's one of the most tractable powerplants we've sat behind in a long time (the Olds 442, Feb. CT&T had the same combination). It will really howl if

you so desire, but it's not the least bit fussy, idling at an even 800 rpm. It's almost dead quiet at speed with those four pipes burbling away under the rear bumper and at a steady 75 mph, it's loafing along at just under 3200 rpm. The basso profundo roar comes in when you open all the carb throats, and there are times when this kind of kick is needed, no matter what the yelping lawmakers say in their committee hearings.

The HydraMatic three-speed automatic takes the prize as the smoothest automatic anywhere. Under normal conditions, it's impossible to feel the shift points . . . just a vague sense that you've changed ratios. We can see why Rolls Royce picked this box with modifications for the Silver Shadow series. Most of the gimmicks included on this GTO are usable, sensible ones. The power seats is one of the things we'd include if we were ordering the car, and while its the expensive route to providing extensive seat adjustment, but it has a lot of range and could be set so we didn't have to look through the top of the steering wheel. Someday, we might see a seat rake control on GM's cars (optional of course) but until then, the electric seat is a good solution. We are glad to see that GM has discovered the electrically defogging rear window (an item included on VWs since the 1968 model year and at no added cost). It makes the blower system as we had on the Olds 442 seem positively antique, and is noiseless, efficient and does its job perfectly. This ought to be a standard item and we'd venture to guess that someday it will be, with enough pressure.

We've long felt that any two door coupe of this type should be officially designated a two-plus-two. Passenger space is fine for two and very tight for four (adults). The rear seat area is more suited to children or one adult at a time, especially for longer hauls. Visibility in all directions is good, but restricted somewhat by the narrow backlite and the closed-in quarters. Viewed through the interior rear view mirror, the top of the backlite neatly slices off the tops of following cars. We eventually relied more on the outside rear view mirror and felt that the inside one should be about an inch lower.

We'd place the GTO in the top ranks of the current crop of sporty cars from a styling standpoint. This year, the entire front end sheet metal (around the headlamps and grille) is covered with GM's "Endura" plastic, and the stylists have thankfully left the bright trim to a minimum. You can order your GTO with an optional full length pin stripe and this is all the car really needs for decoration . . . the



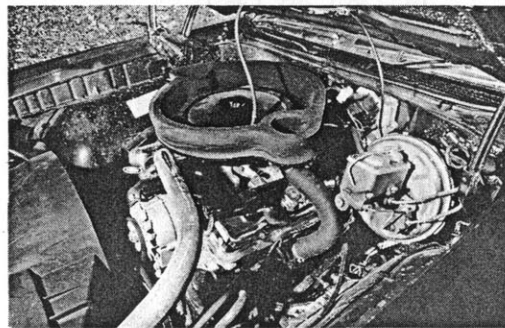
The GTO has the cleanest, best executed styling of all the sporty intermediates.



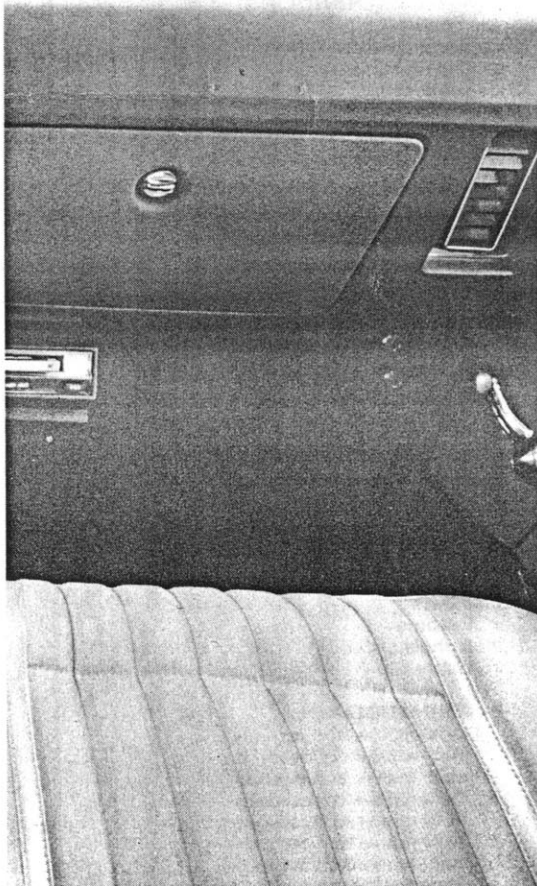
Uncluttered dash is decorated with nice thick rimmed steering wheel (optional) and Ampex tape deck (also optional).



Proper embellishments for a machine of the GTO's class.



360 hefty horses hide here.



sculpturing takes care of the rest.

We expected a rather high rate of fuel consumption with the 455 engine but were surprised when a check of 240 miles showed 17.5 mpg, and this recorded at speeds of 75 mph and over.

There is something that GM, with all its engineering talent and brain pool should seriously think about. During the time we had the car, someone opened the hood and stole two spark plug lead wires. They could have just as easily helped themselves to the Rochester four-barrel carb, or anything else in the engine room. Our question is, why can't they design some kind of hood locking device for domestic cars? Most imported car hoods cannot be opened from the outside. There is usually a pull-type device next to the steering wheel and the *only* way to open the hood is from inside the car. Maybe the idea is just *too* sensible, but on the new sporty and muscle cars, with their multiple carburetors and engine-room goodies, the "midnight auto parts" business will thrive, as long as the makers won't provide this very simple and inexpensive protection. When you pay \$5,000 for a car, *surely* this could be included.

With 455 big inches under your foot, you can virtually will the machine in any direction with the throttle and the yards become inches in straight line running. Handling is

very good for a car that weighs two tons dry, and during our photo runs really got to the nitty gritty, finding it ridiculously simple to hang out the tail and punch the throttle just when the car felt as if it was heading for the ice filled ditch. Highly confidence-inspiring. Now we know how great it must feel in a McLaren. We'll give GM a pat on the head for the instrument panel layout . . . the dials are all large and legible, though the tach is mounted at the end if what seems to be a tunnel. Another mark for providing oil and water temp gauges with real numerals to call out pressure and temperature, accurately. All the important dials are mounted in a deep binnacle right in the driver's line of vision, and there's an engine turned stainless steel piece right below the main housing which carries light, wiper, radio and radio controls, all within easy reach.

Summing up, we came to feel very much at home in this newest GTO . . . it contains a lot of muscle, but muscle the average driver can live with in comfort and confidence. You can ring the changes with optional equipment as far as you'd want to go, or keep it to a minimum. Ready to go, our test car tipped the money-scales to the tune of over \$5000. It all depends on your affluence. Conclusion: a good buy.

(specifications overleaf)

ENGINE

Location:	front
No. of cylinders:	V8
Valve operation:	pushrod-operated overhead valves
Compression ratio:	10.3:1
Carburetion:	single four-barrel Rochester
Bore:	4.12 in.
Stroke:	3.75 in.
Displacement:	455 cu. in. (6.4 liters)
Power (SAE):	330 @ 4800 rpm
Torque:	445 lb. ft. @ 2900 rpm

TRANSMISSION

No. of forward speeds:	three (Hydra-Matic)
Gear ratios:	1st: 2.48:1; 2nd: 1.98:1; 3rd: 1.00:1; Reverse: 2.08:1;
Final drive ratio:	3.07:1

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase:	112.0 in.
Track:	front, 61.0 in.; rear, 60.0 in.
Width:	76.2 in.
Height:	52.3 in.
Length:	202.5 in.
Weight:	3300 lbs.
Fuel capacity:	17.9 Imp. Gals.
Tire size:	G78/14 wide oval

STEERING

Type:	power assisted—recirculating ball
Turning circle:	37.4 ft.
Turns lock to lock:	3.25

SUSPENSION

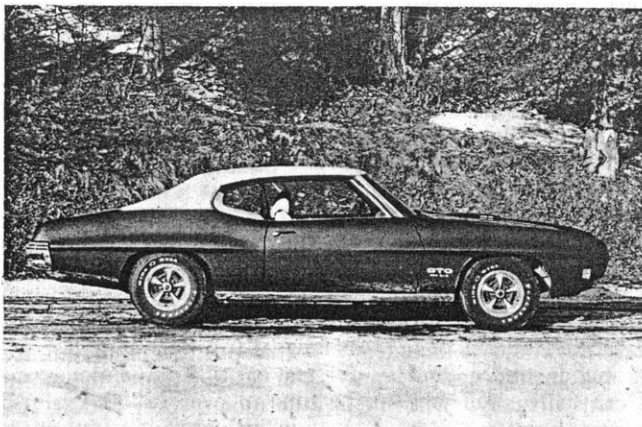
Front:	wishbones, coil springs, hydraulic shocks
Rear:	Live axle, coil springs, hydraulic shocks

BRAKES

Front:	discs (11 in. dia.) power assisted
Rear:	drums—lining area 350.9 sq. in. power assisted

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE— \$3892.00

AS EQUIPPED— \$5296.40



The T&T Rating is an arbitrary figure, in which the tester has attempted to evaluate the entire car, including cost.

T&T RATING SCALE

Excellent 5; Good 4; Average 3;
Fair 2; Unsatisfactory 1;

DRIVER CONTROLS

Throttle response—	4
Brake pedal response—	4
Steering effort—	5
Wheel position—	5
Wheel return—	4
Pedal position—	3
Gearshift linkage—	—
Shift smoothness—	5
Instrument readability—	4

NOISE

Engine—	5
Drive train—	4
Interior—	4

HANDLING

Predictability—	4
Directional control—	4
Sidewind resistance—	5
Ride comfort—	5
Roll resistance—	4
Brake dive—	4
Road feel—	4

INTERIOR

Entry/exit—	5
Front seating comfort—	5
Front leg room—	5
Rear seating comfort—	3
Rear leg room—	3

VISION

Forward—	4
Rear—	3
Side—	3

WEATHER PROTECTION

Wiper effectiveness—	5
Heater/defroster—	5
Ventilation—	4
Weather sealing—	4

TRIM

Paint—	4
Chrome—	4
Upholstery—	4
Hardware—	4

PERFORMANCE—

0-30 mph—	2.1 seconds
0-40 mph—	3.6 seconds
0-50 mph—	4.8 seconds
0-60 mph—	6.9 seconds
0-70 mph—	8.8 seconds
0-80 mph—	10.4 seconds
0-90 mph—	13.9 seconds
Top speed (estimated):	115 mph
Fuel consumption:	16.7 mpg